

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Santa Ana Region

October 25, 2002

ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: Additions to SEP Project List – Perchlorate Wellhead Treatment

DISCUSSION:

The Regional Board may allow a discharger to satisfy some or all of the monetary assessment imposed in an administrative civil liability complaint by funding or completing one or more supplemental environmental projects (SEPs). On May 31, 2002, staff presented a list of proposed SEPs to the Board. Staff reported that this list would be subject to continuous review and amendment as other worthy projects are suggested for inclusion.

Staff is recommending the addition of SEPs that would provide funding for the design and construction of wellhead treatment units to address the perchlorate contamination of public water supply systems in the Rialto, Colton and Chino ground water basins.

The City of Rialto, City of Colton, West San Bernardino County Water District and the Fontana Water Company have removed a number of wells from service as a result of concerns with perchlorate concentrations in these water supply wells. The water purveyors have indicated that the loss of these wells constitutes a water supply emergency, and it is critical that alternative water supplies or wellhead treatment be initiated to replace the lost wells. From a water quality perspective, wellhead treatment would be the preferred alternative, because it would function as a cleanup system to remove this pollutant from the ground water resource.

Representatives of these water purveyors have indicated that their jurisdictions would have severe financial hardships if they had to proceed unilaterally with the wellhead treatment facilities necessary to replace the water lost to perchlorate contamination. Wellhead treatment projects to address perchlorate contamination are estimated to cost in the range of \$2 million per well. In recognition of these factors, on September 13, 2002, the Regional Board directed staff to develop innovative strategies to assist these purveyors with identifying and securing replacement water supplies. This proposal to add SEPs to the list, staff's recommendations related to the use of Cleanup and Abatement Account funds to support the wellhead treatment effort (elsewhere on today's agenda), and staff's research and recommendations to the water purveyors concerning the availability of Recycling Program (program to restore contaminated water supplies) grants and state revolving fund loans all respond to the Board's direction for innovative strategies.

Staff intends to request that the water purveyors identify wellhead treatment projects that would benefit from the support of SEP funds. The funds would be required to be used for projects that have an outstanding potential for being implemented. The receiving jurisdiction would have to commit to both completion of the wellhead treatment project, as well as the use of SEP funding to support only that effort. We understand that some wellhead treatment projects are already in design, and these projects would be good candidates for SEP funding.

RECOMMENDATION: Support addition of wellhead treatment projects as SEPs.